

A National System

Who We Are

The U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System is —

the community corrections arm of the federal judiciary.

part of the U.S. district courts.

a key player in the federal criminal justice process at both the pretrial and post-conviction stages.

a national system of employees, who include probation and pretrial services officers and officer assistants; information technology, budget, and human resources professionals; and support staff.

a national system with a shared mission, professional identity, goals, and values.

What We Do

U.S. probation and pretrial services officers, considered the "eyes and ears" of the federal courts, investigate and supervise persons charged with or convicted of federal crimes. Officers –

gather and verify information about persons who come before the courts.

prepare reports that the courts rely on to make release and sentencing decisions.

supervise persons released to the community by the courts and paroling authorities.

direct persons under supervision to services to help them stay on the right side of the law, including substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, medical care, training, and employment assistance.

How We're Organized and Managed

In the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System, management is local, while oversight and support are national.

Locations. U.S. probation and pretrial services offices are located in 93 of the 94 U.S. district courts, which include the U.S. territories. (Probation and pretrial services for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands are provided by the District of Guam.)

Organization. In some districts, probation and pretrial services are separate offices. In other districts, probation and pretrial services are combined in one office. The choice is up to the individual districts.

Management. In each district, management of probation and pretrial services is in the hands of chief probation and pretrial services officers, who are directly responsible to the courts they serve. Chiefs do their own hiring, manage their own budgets, and decide how to run their offices.

National oversight. The Criminal Law Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States oversees the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System. The Committee addresses such matters as the system's operations, workload, funding, and resources, as well as employment standards for system employees and issues pertaining to the administration of criminal law.

National support. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts carries out the Judicial Conference's policies and provides the courts with a broad range of administrative, management, and program support. The Administrative Office Director has delegated to the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services the responsibility to support the probation and pretrial services system, including developing system policies, supporting system programs, and reviewing the work of probation and pretrial services offices.

How We Differ District to District

U.S. probation and pretrial services officers share a mission and operate under the same policies and procedures. Nonetheless, some aspects of the work and how it's carried out differ district to district.

Number of officers. Just because a district is large geographically does not mean it has more probation and pretrial services officers. The number of officers on board in each district depends on the district's workload.

Workload. Officer workload is not the same in every district. Sometimes efforts on the part of law enforcement—the Department of Justice—generate increases in arrests; for instance, for drug and immigration crimes. Such action can dramatically increase criminal filings in a given district and impact the workload of judges and officers alike.

Rural/urban differences. Working as a probation or pretrial services officer in a big city is considerably different than doing that same job in a rural or sparsely populated area. Officers working in less populated areas sometimes must travel long distances to fulfill their supervision responsibilities. They may have access to fewer resources than their urban counterparts do, especially for substance abuse or mental health treatment or employment assistance. On the other hand, officers in metropolitan areas often must carry out their supervision duties in high-crime areas.

<http://www.uscourts.gov/fedprob/system.html>